

## AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Good morning, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischman and members of the committee. My name is Allison Polesel, I am from Avon, and I am a student at the University of Connecticut - School of Social Work. Today I am testifying in support of An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education.

I support this bill because a child is at his or her most impressionable in the first five years of life and public kindergarten does not begin until age five. We need all children to start their education earlier. Private preschools in the state do a lot of good in making sure that their students will transition well when they begin in Kindergarten. However, as preschool programs are not free and public like the latter grades, some children's families cannot afford the preschool costs or cannot take the time from work to transport children to and from school. As an outcome these children are missing out and are not prepared when they get to Kindergarten.

In some communities, Head Start programs help. In some studies, it had been shown that children in these programs learn quicker, have higher IQ scores and behave better than if they had not been a part of the program. However, Head Start is also not available to everyone and not even available in all communities.

If we continue to lose the opportunity to positively affect a child at a most significant stage of development - particularly when one or both parents work - we'll continue to watch some students fall behind. All children have been shown to benefit from high quality prekindergarten, and for those children who are at higher risk of failing, it makes the difference by giving them a solid foundation to grow on. Those who attend high quality preschool are 40 percent less likely to need extra help in school and are more likely to go to college. They are also more likely to avoid welfare and the criminal justice system- the cost of sending a child to preschool for a year is far less than the cost of keeping an inmate in prison for a year. It would be a positive return on investing in Connecticut's young children's futures.

Please ensure that all of Connecticut's preschoolers have an equal opportunity to succeed in public schools by giving them the early childhood experiences they need to set a firm foundation for growth and learning.

Thank you.